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48. A child, whose one of its milk teeth drops out, stands some five yards away facing the door of the hut and throws the tooth over the roof of the hut, saying:

"*Ai Mungulu ilwe lyetu-ulye, ndowi lyangu lyandowa lyai*"
"Oh! new tooth your there is, give me my of good one!"

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Religion. The matter of the religious beliefs professed by natives of East Central Africa is one beset with many difficulties to the student of today. It has been the subject of many essays by workers in the missionary field, but the wide contact of the natives of Nyasaland with missionary effort during the past thirty years has done much to confuse the problem, and one finds that many missionaries in their writings rather color the picture with their own feelings.

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I think probably the Yao with whom I am now concerned have a truer conception of their own beliefs than many of the subject tribes among whom mission teaching has more easily taken root. The religious beliefs of a people are to a large extent the reflection of the circumstances under which that people lives. The outstanding event to all natives is death. At death, something is lost to the body, without which life is impossible. This is the *mzimu* which may be translated "soul" or "spirit." The *mzimu* is said to leave the body of the dying man when he becomes moribund or unconscious. It appears that the same *mzimu* may leave the body during unconscious states unconnected with death, as when a man faints, in epilepsy, and during sleep.

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Apart from this evidence of the dissociation of the *mzimu* from the living body, the Yao believe that a man's shadow is an objective manifestation of the soul and they will say "the shadow is the *mzimu*." Fear is experienced if a man jumps on the shadow of his fellow. Light is also thrown on the constitution of the *mzimu* by the belief in a certain evil-spirit which dwells in deep pools. It is called *chimulu-mzozi*, which means "one who may finish (drink up) all the water." The superstition regarding this evil spirit is that it can suck the blood from your shadow as you stand at the edge of the pool, till you become so weak that you fall in and are drowned.

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After leaving the body at death, the *mzimu* goes to take up its place in the spirit-world, occupying a position corresponding to that held by the man during his life. With a truly materialistic conception, the soul is supposed to have all the attributes of the dead man, to be wealthy in proportion as the man was so on earth, and its relative position will be identical with that which he held among the living. The tribal *chief* becomes a paramount *chief* in the spirit world, the lesser *chiefs* holds sway in his lesser capacity, etc. We shall see that in intercession, when the tribe is threatened with calamities, it is the late paramount *chief* who is appealed to for help, and when one feudal *chief* is at war with another, the *chief's* dead predecessors will be called upon for aid. When a village is moved, it is from the spirit of the dead headman of the village that success in the enterprise is sought. Similarly, in family troubles, some dead ancestor is entreated to set things right, while a native

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be supposed to live in such trees. They are convenient natural objects for them to occupy, in fact practically the only ones to be found in villages. Trees may accordingly, therefore, be looked upon as to some degree sacred. Almost each twin shrine or piece of calico may be placed as an offering to the spirits of the departed. But the Tso do not erect little huts in their vicinity, hung about with strips of calico as is the custom among the Anyanja.

Macdonald[1] mentions the spirits in connection with fetiche and other hills round Blantyre and supposes them to be the spirits of the places themselves. This I think is unlikely; they would probably turn out to be spirits bearing the names of long departed Anyanja chiefs whom the immigrant Amangoche Tso venerated just " to be on the safe side," since they had come and taken the country which long ago belonged to the former tribe. When approaching or passing any spot held to be the dwelling place of spirits, salutation is made by clapping the hands.

Spirits of the departed may enter into animals or may take the form of animals, commonly lions and sometimes large snakes (python), but this belief is not so general among the Tso as among other tribes, in my opinion. An animal which is so possessed is called *kupasha*, from *ku-upasha*, " to be transformed."

Apart from this habitation of inanimate objects above mentioned by natives, there is nothing that points to a belief in Animism among the Tso, so far as I know. Neither hills, rocks, streams, lakes, nor trees have their own spirits, nor are they endowed by the native mind with life.

Deceased persons appear to the living in dreams, the native apparently believing that the deceased appears in his material body.

They believe also in revelation of wishes of the deceased through the medium of the living. The spirit of the deceased is supposed to enter into the medium. The medium, I am informed, is always a woman, never a man. From the descriptions of some of these revelations shown, there can be no doubt that they are manifestations of hysteria. The medium works herself up into a frenzy of excitement and in her delirium gives out the name of the deceased, the voice which speaks being that of the spirit within her. She rolls on the ground and foams at the mouth, uttering the word of revelation which is generally to the effect that some deceased chief's spirit is feeling aggrieved at the neglect of his tomb; the voice may go on to say that certain practices are forbidden, or demand that certain rites be observed by the people. The spirits which possess her are generally spoken of as *mandu*, a word which, though sometimes used as equivalent to *mizimu*, usually seems to have rather a sinister significance. Insane persons are called *mandu* and are thought to be possessed by a spirit, and vapor baths with *mandu* may be practised for their cure. In the case of the death of anyone who is possessed, in answer to my interrogation, I have been told that both the spirit which has entered into the man and his own *mizimu* leave his body.

[1] Op. cit., vol. i, p. 81.

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SOME ANIMISTIC BELIEFS AMONG THE YAOS OF BRITISH CENTRAL AFRICA.

By the Rev. Alexander Hetherwick, M.A., F.R.G.S., of the Blantyre Mission, British Central Africa.

The original home of the Yao tribe may be roughly described as the large and lofty plateau which lies to the east of Lake Nyasa, and is bounded by the Rivers Rovuma and Lujenda. Forty years ago, about the time that Livingstone first entered the country, they began to be pressed on the north by the Magwangwara, and on the east by the Makuwa tribes. These invasions caused them to move, some westward down to the shores of Lake Nyasa or the banks of the Upper Shire River, and others southward to the Shire Highlands, Mount Zomba and the eastern slopes of Mount Mlanje. In every case they succeeded in either subjugating or expelling the original Manganja inhabitants of those districts, and in no case have they lost their own independence.

Till about fifty or sixty years ago the Yao were untouched by any external influences, and when at that time the Arab and coast traders from Kilwa and Zanzibar began to trust and trade with them they appear to have been little affected by contact with those visitors. Only a few of the younger men aped at following Mahommedan tenets, and these only grafted on to their still cherished belief in the old faiths of their fathers. The Koran, or a few of its texts, was added to the many other charms they had already long about their necks. The faith which the first missionaries found them in possession of when they entered the country twenty-five years ago may therefore be held to be the undiluted creed of the tribe from time immemorial.

The foundation of the Yao religion is to be found in the *Mzimu*, the soul, shade or spirit which every human being possesses, and which is the inspiring agent in his life. They profess to give no definite description of the nature or characteristics of this soul. In their minds however it is allied with the shadow, and would seem to bear to the body the relation which a picture has to the reality. Their word for a shadow is *chinthili*, which is also the term that they use to denote a picture, and pictures they associate with the shades or shadows of the dead. I have known natives refuse to enter a room where pictures were hung on the walls "because of the *mizimu*, souls, which were in them." The photographic camera was at first an object of dread, and when it was turned upon a group of natives they dispersed in all directions with shrieks of terror. "The Europeans,"

they said, "we shall be able to take away their shadows and they would die." In their mind the *limbo* was allied to the shadow or picture, and the removal of it to the photographic plate would cause the disease or death of the shadowless body.

As an instance of their faith in the close relationship of the *limbo* and the picture or shadow, I may relate the following incident. An influential Yao chief on Mount Zomba with whom I was on terms of intimate friendship for years, refused to allow himself to be photographed, fearing the consequences on his life. At last I was able to persuade him to give me a sitting, but on the sole condition that the picture was to be shown to none of his subjects but to be sent out of the country as soon as possible. He feared lest some ill-wisher might use it as a means towards his bewitchment. Some months afterwards the chief became seriously ill, and in the minds of his attendants his illness was attributed to some accident having befallen the photographic plate on which they believed the picture of their chief to be imprinted. If that negative had been broken in England, whither it had been sent, their chief's illness would be accounted for. Accordingly they appealed to the divining article, who, however, after consulting the "bits," record them that the picture was intact, and that in consequence the disease must be ascribed to some other cause.

The *limbo* or soul is recognised as the chief agency in disease. To dream is, in the Yao tongue, *kuonyesela mzimbo*, where *mzimbo* is the plural form of *limbo*. The *limbo* is supposed to go out and visit the scenes and persons it dreams about, and in turn is visited by the *mzimbo* of others, dead or living. Pains in the body on rising from sleep in the morning are usually attributed to such nocturnal visits, while diseases or pains of a severe type are ascribed to malignitous by the whips of the *mzimbo* or more frequently of the witches who prowl around during the night watches.

Madness, idiocy and the ravings of delirium or disease are accounted for by a similar agency. The sufferers are the wandering *limbo* of the spirits, and a sudden fit of epilepsy or insanity is described as *pakuwerela mzimbo*, the spirits have seized him. Such persons are usually regarded with awe, as living in close contact with the unseen, but no incantations or enchantments are ever used to expel the spirit in possession. Some native doctors are credited with a knowledge of certain medicines which they say are effectual in such cases, but their application in no way differs from those employed in treating ordinary types of disease. Idiots and the insane are allowed to wander at will about the village, and only when violent symptoms show themselves as a danger to the community is any physical restraint put upon them.

The *mzimbo* are also recognised as the inspiring agencies in the ravings of the witch detective. This person, usually a woman, is called in to discover who is the guilty agent in cases of mysterious deaths or outbreak of an epidemic in a village. She arrives on the scene and takes up her abode for a few days previous to her actual demonstration. She mixes with the people, learns all the scandal and gossip of the community, and at night prowls about the houses searching for

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evidence. On the appointed day the *banyue mundo*, to dance the spirits or *kumunda*, to rave or prophesy, and in the ravings of the dance she calls out the name of some party who is afterwards accused of being the sorcerer or witch. Followed by a crowd of excited spectators the dance through the village spurs in hand, stopping here and there to dig up charms or medicines which the supposed witch has buried in the ground as the instruments of his occult practices. It is only in cases of supposed special difficulty, or when the magnitude of the supposed crimes demands that special measures be adopted for their detection, that the services of such a witch detective are called in. In ordinary cases these appeals are made to the divining oracle who consults his "bete" as a means of discovering crimes of this nature.

Among the Yao the human being is believed to be the sole possessor of a *kudzo*. I have been unable to discover any trace of a theory that the *kudzo* may pass into any animal or inanimate object and then confer upon it the nature or power of a *kudzo*. Such belief is shortlived among the *Angoni* and *Achewa* tribes to the westward by Nyasa and the upper Shire River, and the intelligent Yao is aware of this, but he states that among his people no such belief exists. Even charms which have the effect of healing or warding off disease, or of protecting the bearer from war or wild beasts or other danger by land or water, are supposed to possess this power without any idea of their being possessed by a *kudzo* or other spirit influence. The nearest approach to such a theory is in the case of certain powerful "doctors" who have obtained special medicine by means of which, at death, they can transform themselves into lions, leopards, crocodiles/alligators. Lepers also are sometimes supposed to become hippopotami. But both of these cases must be regarded rather as transmutations of bodily than transmigrations of soul.

It will be thus seen that the nature of the human *kudzo* is closely allied to that of the *mundo*, which are the inspiring spirits to soothsay and to the ecstasy of prophecy or lamentation. What the origin of these inspiring *mundo* is, or to whom they belonged when in bodily life, the Yao holds no theory. He is content to accept them as they are, *mundo iyaye*, "*Just mundo and nothing more*," as he says.

It is, however, when we follow the disembodied *kudzo* after death and examine its position and power in the other world that we find ourselves in a region of higher spiritual conviction.

In dreams or in fainting fits the *kudzo* leaves the body but only to return to it with the awakening consciousness. At death, however, it leaves the earthly abode never to return. It is now spoken of as having gone to *unkungo* or *ulungu*. This word, which lies at the basis of all Yao theories of the ghost and after death, will be dealt with later on as regards its derivation and connections in the Bantu family of languages. In its natural use it bears two significations.

1. The word *unkungo* is in this first instance applied to the human soul or *kudzo* after death when it is considered as an inhabitant of the spirit world. Even in life a man, when he meets with any ghost or spirit, will be heard to say, "*Ndi my unkungo*," as if his soul had an influence in determining the character of his